

Approaching Comprehension Question A

Aoife O'Driscoll

www.aoifesnotes.com

Types of text

- ✦ Discursive/informative
- ✦ Narrative/aesthetic
- ✦ Visual



In general you can expect...

- ✦ A piece **from** literature
- ✦ A piece **about** literature/being an author/free speech
- ✦ A **blend of visual and written text** (in recent years the visual element has expanded once more)
- ✦ A **speech** or **article** based on the theme

The Questions

- ✦ Three questions: 15 mark, 15 mark, 20 mark
- ✦ The style question is usually - but not always - worth 20 marks

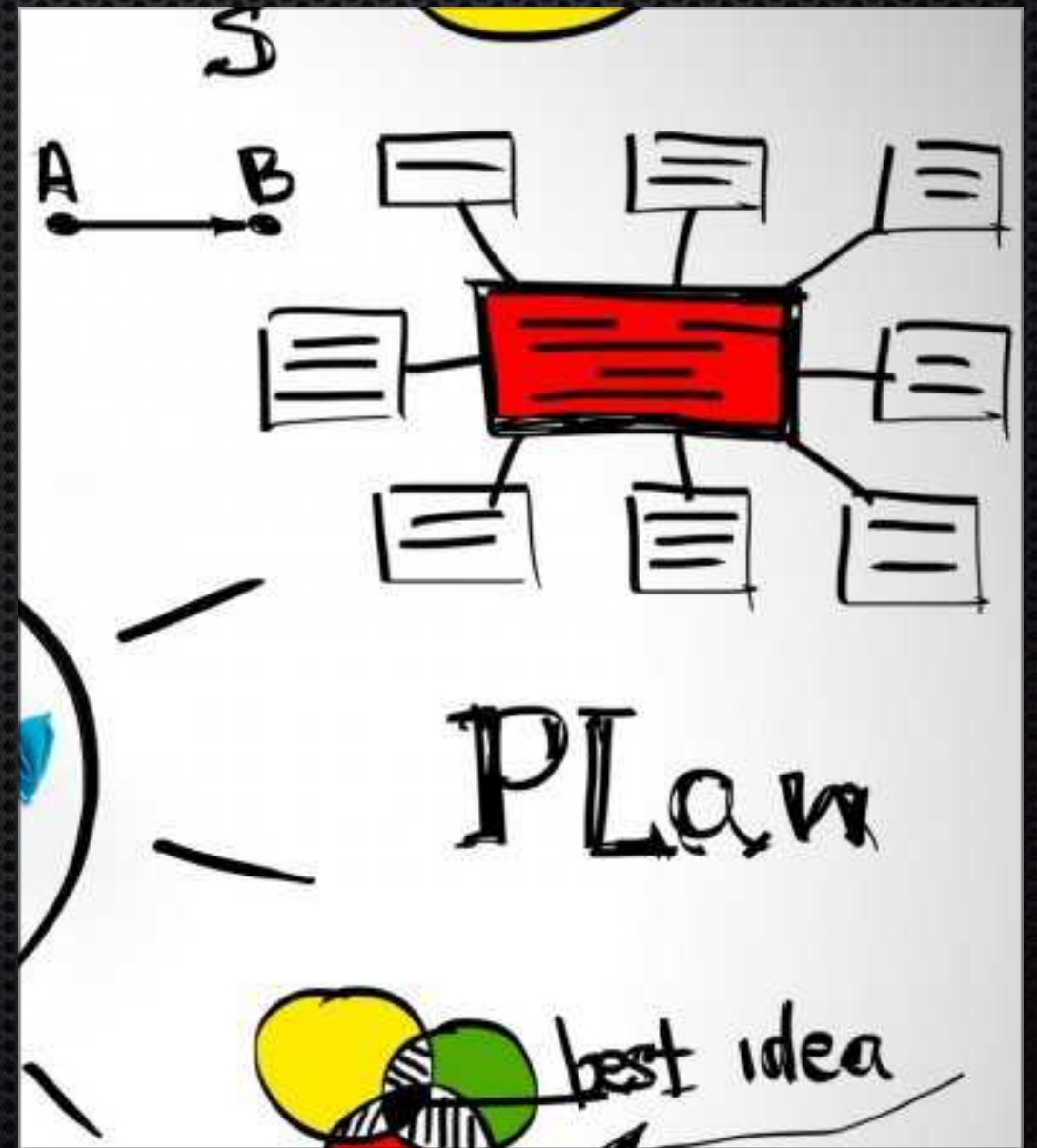


Question (i)

- ✦ **Basic comprehension:** summarising and presenting in your own words the main thrust of the argument or the points the author makes.
- ✦ ‘Outline, in your own words, the insights the writer shares about...’
- ✦ ‘Based on your reading of TEXT 2, what do you learn about...’
- ✦ Unless the question explicitly states otherwise, you should make **three points** in your answer.

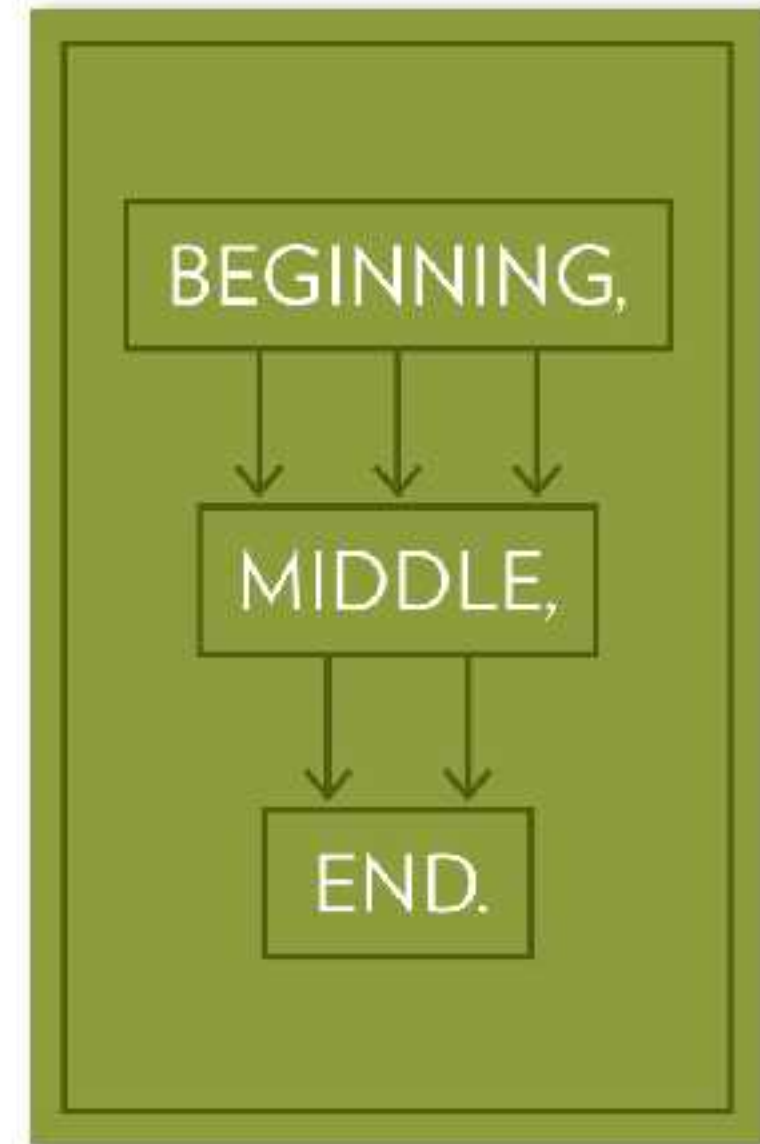
Answering Question (i)

- **Make** your point (it should directly answer the question)
- **Develop** this point by explaining it in more detail.
- **Support** your point with appropriate evidence/quotation from the text
- **Comment** on the evidence and explain why it supports your point.



Tips

- ✧ Look at the beginning, middle and end of the text when selecting points. This avoids the danger of repetition. Remember, the writer may take several paragraphs to explore an issue.



- ✦ Write a **short plan** for every answer.
- ✦ Check that each point in your plan **directly answers the question** and is **different** to your other points.
- ✦ Use your **own words** as much as possible.
- ✦ Keep quotes **short, relevant and woven into the fabric of your sentence**. You will not get marks for simply copying from the texts.
- ✦ Where possible, use **link words and phrases** between paragraphs. 'The writer also...' 'Finally, Gore discusses...'

Question (ii)

- ✦ This question often focuses on **your response** to an aspect of the written text.
- ✦ In recent years, this question has become quite challenging. However, if you focus on **the quality of your explanation** rather than worrying too much about whether your feelings or opinions are right or wrong, you will be fine.

Question (iii)

- ✦ The style question is generally the third question, but not always. Check the paper carefully.



- ✦ Approach this question with a **shopping list** in your head.
- ✦ Ask yourself what **type** of text you are dealing with. This should help you to identify the language genre/genres that will be used.
- ✦ If it is a speech, for example, it will probably be written in a mixture of the languages of argument and persuasion.
- ✦ Write down the **key features** of these genres: rhetorical questions, triadic patterns, inclusive language, and look for them in the text. Some, if not all, will be there. This is an easier approach than reading the text without knowing what exactly you are looking for.
- ✦ (For notes on the visual text, see the specific slideshows on this website.)

Recognising the Style Question

- ✦ How does the writer convey...?
- ✦ How does the writer give us a clear impression of...?
- ✦ Do you agree that this extract is both skilfully written and perceptively observed...?
- ✦ Do you agree that the speaker is both engaging and inspiring in his address to...?
- ✦ Do you agree that elements of narrative and aesthetic language are used effectively to engage the reader...?
- ✦ Etc.

Key Points

- ✦ Answer the question clearly.
- ✦ Provide reasons for your opinion.
- ✦ Offer examples to illustrate your points (this is essential when analysing style).
- ✦ Incorporate quotations into your sentences.
- ✦ Use verbs - 'suggests', 'evokes', 'captures' etc. when discussing the richness of language.
- ✦ Always explain why a word or phrase is so effective.

As a general rule...

- ✦ **Factual information** informs, supports, clarifies, shows
- ✦ **Rhetorical questions** provoke, engage, interest
- ✦ **Emotive language** moves, provokes, persuades
- ✦ **Anecdotes** amuse, interest, engage
- ✦ **Descriptive language** creates, captures, suggests